

## News Release

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### Evers statement on JFC budget action

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers issued the following statement on action by the Joint Committee on Finance on the 2015-17 education budget.

“Wisconsin is nationally renowned for its quality public schools. We are a leader among the states in graduation rates, Advanced Placement participation, and ACT scores because of our highly trained educators and the support of families and local communities. The citizens of Wisconsin — measured by budget hearings, local advocacy, and recent polls — voiced their overwhelming support for our public schools and increasing funding in this budget.

“I am troubled that the Joint Finance Committee spent its time and effort designing a plan that erodes the basic foundation of Wisconsin’s public school system. If we want all students to achieve, we cannot continue to ask our public schools to do more with less. The eventual outcome of that exercise will be two systems of public schools: those in local communities that can afford to provide a quality education through referendum and those that cannot.

“Here is a look at some of JFC’s changes:

- **For the first time ever, there is no increase in state imposed revenue limits** over the next two school years, while voucher and independent charter school payments are increased in each year.
- State general equalization aid to public schools is **cut in the first year** to pay for voucher expansion and increased independent charter school payments. **This leaves public schools with less state general aid than in 2010.**
- **Continues the freeze on state special education aid for what will be the eighth consecutive year**, covering roughly a quarter of district special education costs while creating a new voucher program that drains funds from public schools.
- **Essentially eliminates teacher licensing standards** by allowing public and private schools to hire anyone to teach, even those without a bachelor’s degree, **planting Wisconsin at the bottom nationally**, below states with the lowest student achievement levels.
- **Imposes a new state test** on today’s 10th-graders in all public schools and private school students receiving vouchers that they **must pass to graduate in two years.**

(more)

“This state budget, as rewritten last night, continues to walk away from our constitutional obligations to educate all students in local public schools. Now, this budget fully funds voucher expansion for private school kids and priorities of special interests. Our local public school kids are left with a combination of cuts, freezes, and a \$100 increase in per pupil aid in the second year. Our 860,000 students attending traditional public schools are left with a funding formula that nearly everyone agrees is broken. At a time when other states are reinvesting in public education, we are dropping in how we financially support our public school students compared to other states. I fear the direction we are headed takes us away from Wisconsin’s history of academic success.”

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